

The current pandemic crisis frightens many people and perhaps us too. Nevertheless, it is now particularly important that we open ourselves up to the opportunities and challenges that the Lord offers us along the way. It is important that we open our eyes and hearts, since at this moment in history our “opportunities” from God may be coming to us through the hands of the people and their basic needs.

Brothers, let us try to live our charism with creativity and generosity! Let us open ourselves up to others, to those who- like the first friars to arrive in Germany- come from the “ultramontane” or from who knows where! Let us give our Franciscan hearts to the many who are in need! Let us offer our charism to our fellow citizens, who may be immersed in lifestyles that fill them with things but not necessarily with happiness! Let us open ourselves up to the Order, which, even now, is acquiring a new face, with new tones and shades! Let us open ourselves up to the Holy Spirit who always inspires us with the fresh breeze of innovation, all the innovation that God alone can provide!

This jubilee connects us directly to our charismatic sources, to the earliest experiences of Franciscan life and mission. However, it also connects us to a new reality of evangelical life, a reality that does not yet exist, but one that we, with the power of the Almighty, can help bring into being.



fr. Carlos A. Trovarelli

Friar Carlos A. TROVARELLI
Minister General

www.franziskaner-minoriten.de

Titelfoto: Älteste erhaltene Darstellung des heiligen Franziskus von Assisi
im Kloster San Benedetto (Subiaco), stock.adobe.com



800 Jahre
**franziskanisches
Leben** in Deutschland

Dear brothers,

When I decided to compose a letter conveying my best wishes to you, the friars of the Province of St. Elizabeth in Germany on the occasion of the 800th anniversary of our presence in Würzburg, I realized that my few and simple words could never articulate the lofty sentiments that I wanted to express.

As I began to write, the first concept that came to my mind was “life.” The arrival of those first friars in Würzburg, in 1221, establishes a direct connection with Francis of Assisi, while he lived. It links us to the founding activities of the early “Chapters,” when the penitent Minorite community decided to send missionaries to the “ultramontane” lands. Indeed, that same year gave rise to the Earlier Rule, a compendium of citations and indications for leading an evangelical life.

The second concept was “charisma lived in simplicity.” It made my heart beat faster as I read about it in the scant historical record. At that time, eight hundred years ago, the friars would settle on the outskirts of a city. One of their activities was working in neighborhoods with leper hospitals. I immediately imagined the simplicity of life and the charismatic intensity of those “proto communities.” Such simplicity is reflected in other visible signs. I am referring to the still current Franciscan simplicity that is “literally” drafted into the architectural blueprint of our church in Würzburg. Although the church has been altered over the centuries, it continues to reflect of the spirituality of its origins, even to this day.

The friary and church underwent numerous modifications and renovations over the centuries, not only because of the natural consequences of the passage of time, but also because of wars, fires and various other calamities. At the same time, the Minorite community underwent important changes of its own as the years passed and historical events took place. There were suppressions, interventions by civil or ecclesiastical powers and other circumstances that changed the face of the community. In fact, after the initial foundation of that first and simple Minorite fraternity, Conventual presences thereafter were sometimes comprised of large communities and sometimes smaller fraternities. Sometimes they were reduced to the presence of a single, elderly friar and other times, they comprised small groups of friars- including “foreign” friars- who were called in to save the presence and revive the Conventual charism.

Thus, this current anniversary, linked to the Friary of the Holy Cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ in Würzburg, acquires additional significance in the form of “hope.” I am referring to hope in the Lord who has shown us his providence to this day. I therefore believe that the right mindset for celebrating this 800th anniversary springs from idea of taking shelter in the faithfulness of our provident God who is the source of our hope.

The Most High, Good Lord, directed the hearts of Francis of Assisi and his followers to live the charism in simplicity, but with radical conviction. The successive reconstructions of your architectural complex and fraternal setting bear witness to us in our time, a time filled with challenges.

We do indeed “live” in a demanding time, one that often makes us doubt God’s fidelity and the real possibilities that we have to keep the charism and mission alive. Our current historical and cultural situation threatens to deprive us of the joy of the Gospel, to take away our sense of hope and our charismatic convictions. Sometimes we are tempted to abandon our belief in the importance of Franciscan life in our time. In reality, the opposite is true. We have valid testimony reminding us that the charism we have received continues to endure, and remains an effective sign of hope for us, for the Church, and for the world.

The friars in Germany have gone forth several times over the last eight hundred years. The Province has experienced its own ups and downs, but has always managed to revive itself. These revivals, however, are not connected to statistical strengths such as the age of the friars or the size of the Province. Rather, they are linked to our trust in God’s fidelity and our deep convictions. A good example of this was the recent erection of your friary in the Diocese of Osnabrück. It showed that you are men who believe, men who are capable of doing new things with others.

The world has changed and keeps on moving. Yet, even in old “posts” such as Würzburg and throughout Germany, new things can happen. We must not only focus on ourselves, but incorporate a believing, faithful and forward-thinking outlook. We are all called to keep moving. One of the signs of today’s changing world has undoubtedly been the recent surge in migration. In reality, these surges have always existed. However, in recent years, they have acquired a special notoriety in the Mediterranean basin and elsewhere. For a “new” world, a new society, we need new answers. The history of our Franciscan presence in Würzburg bears witness to this.